

Real Estates in Cyprus. A Diary.

Anne Kockelkorn

Introductory reading compiled by Hélène Frichot

Reading of Anne Kockelkorn's Real Estates in Cyprus. A Diary.

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Diaries, being open-ended diurnal constructions, do not usually include pages of contents, but this one does. The page of contents here offers a preparatory journey for the reader, an advance itinerary, letting them know towards what destinations they are about to set off. The diary as journey form becomes a travelogue that takes us to the divided island of Cyprus in order to introduce us to a number of characters, not all of them human, and material entanglements. The diary 'presents the double faces of the city by means of fragments, moments of experience and reflection upon these experiences'.¹ There is much that is implied by the diary form, 'who is being addressed? Who writes? Shouldn't the diary remain a secret? Or is this a document that was lost and then found?'² What unfolds is an exemplary instance of transversal writing-reading, with acknowledgment offered to F       Guattari's important essay *The Three Ecologies*.³

A critique of the geopolitics and economics of infrastructures in the context of Cyprus is extended, revealed in a sequence of glimpses, the far away, the close up: from tears ritually shed to plastic washed up as flotsam and jetsam, from Saharan sand registered as the material index of the threatened 'desertification of Cyprus' to the point of view of parents rendered as hapless tourists. There is the colonial past that runs through this account of a split island state where displacements are procured via language and place; via ethnic, political, and class identity; and via troubled processes of subjectification. What we come to understand is that 'Cyprus is a *microcosm* of the Middle East'.⁴

A focus on an expanded understanding of infrastructures, failing, flailing, falling apart, challenges any assumption about architecture as the autonomous art of form-making. Infrastructures here concern territory and set the scene of real-estate reconceptualized as infra-

structural space. The infrastructure of EU citizenship is presented as a sociopolitical problematic. The infrastructure of the special economic zone or tax haven is drawn to our attention.

Again and again, the failure of such infrastructures is described through minor encounters: bank cards that do not work, which send us on a journey (with the diarist) through town, a transversal journey revealing the proximity of dilapidated streets just one block away from a luxury shopping strip. Centrally, the destructive role of real-estate as one of the most insidious infrastructures dedicated to the capture of spatial commodity takes hold. In all, a generalized failure of architectural infrastructures is witnessed through the eyes of the diarist, who presents 'a world being produced, made from mountains, deserts, the sea'⁵ entangled with human modes of settlement and their devastating aftereffects.

Anthropos-scenic infrastructures composed of waste create the monsters that will continue to haunt the generations to follow. Plastics, plastics everywhere, and not a drop to drink. The post-Anthropocene Mariner must cope with a plastic-damaged planet suffused on every level and across even the most isolated territories with microplastics. Plastic trash is encountered everywhere, evidence of the failure of global waste management infrastructures and habits of production and consumption. The global flows of

plastic arrive on these shores to further demonstrate the embedded location of Cyprus, its conflicted histories both political and environmental. The collection and storage of flotsam becomes a project for the diarist. The promise of a possible project in collaboration: A 'to do' list, an ambition to make a change before the hopelessness of such an activity sets in. The anxiety of collecting one's own store of plastic water bottles, one's own plastic debris. Like the Wertheim sisters in Los Angeles who collect their own plastics to weave a distributed coral reef, a project that gathers over 10,000 people from all over the world, an enormous collaborative project, explains Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble*.⁶ The empty plastic water bottles that the diarist guiltily collects further speak to the failed infrastructures of the availability, on Cyprus, of potable tap water.

All this talk of infrastructure draws attention to the question of who should look after the infrastructure, for infrastructure always requires maintenance (a theme developed by Catharina Gabrielsson in *Architecture and Feminisms: Ecologies, Economies, Technologies*, 2018). Maintenance, it requires a manifesto (Mierle Ukeles), and an ethics of care (Maria Puig de la Bellacasa; Carol Gilligan; Joan Tronto; Virginia Held).

In contrast with these failed infrastructures, global and local, maintenance and an ethics of care emerge in the depicted

scene of Olga's garden. By contrast to the multi-residential development called *The One*, the new, empty, part object, part finished high-rise pushing people out of the city, Olga's garden is a refuge. An ecology of plants: 'Plants as expressions of geopolitical forces as "beings" subject to migration/translocation through physically being introduced to alter the existing landscape or being subject, in-situ, to a shifting climate.'⁷

The voice of the writer through understated asides, and non-intrusive descriptions, and even a quiet lament, a small worry. The voice of the diarist and her intimate observations, she is an 'informed outsider',⁸ informing us of the goings on of the divided state, she offers 'an "open" mode of attention'.⁹ The delicate, non-intrusive way in which a writer's own cultural background is brought into this geopolitical situation where sometimes the violence of her own political milieu is exposed: 'On April 24th 2018, the Bavarian Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Markus Söder, adopts a paragraph to the general rules of procedure for public authorities of the Free State of Bavaria, "to install a cross in the entrance area of each official service building".' Simply: 'Crosses in the entrance of about 1100 public office buildings.' The horror of dogmatic Christianity, the fervor. This becomes a variant of a violent imposition of identities, revealing a subterranean yet strong current of racism in what she bears witness to. The cultural

context of an image of German forests flashes up, a dialectical image in contrast to the desert, in contrast to the Cypriot landscape and its histories of appropriation and transformation.

The duration of the diarist's stay in Cyprus is enunciated simply: 'So that's Spring.' An economy of language places us in the vicinity of the coast, in a somewhere else, with an immediacy and concision of language. Some of the diary fragments are but a few lines long. 'Life', for instance, becomes some exigency apprehended by architects and planners, this impossibly difficult concept-experience is given but two lines: life, survival, vital. Concepts emptied, one wonders, on account of their marketability.

The aim is to allow the transversal relations of architectural objects to emerge, populated by characters, conversations, histories and controversies. The backdrop of postcolonial conflicts and ethnic differences is crucial, seeping into all the combined infrastructures. These broader geopolitical themes are cut through with everyday stories and conversations through which characters begin to emerge. Processes of subjectivation tied up amid social relations amid environmental issues of territorial development, and again, the brute insistence of a real-estate urban economic logic.

The cast of characters that play their parts, the subjectivities in process, in

and out of relation, from these characters we can chart a cartography of their matters of concern: the diarist's parents, who take a travel deal advertised in *Tagesspiegel* or *Zeit*, offer us an insight into tourist infrastructures. Tourists, we are told, outnumber cats and people; Maria the artist, who recalls a visit to a northern Greek village in the 1980s, reflects on the social reproduction of crying that eludes commodification, a caesura where resistance persists, a possibility; Olga's house and garden are now entangled amid the new real estate development called *The One*; A colleague, Chrysanthé talks of the Saharan sands and the associated atmospherics that suffuse the environmental milieu; the two administrative officers G. and N. in the planning office might be associated with the many gatekeepers of Kafka's novels; A. the memorable CEO of *happyhouse developers* (yes, there is a sense of sarcasm in that fictional name) a property developer millionaire, who has his doubts about socio-demographically mixed residential development: what a bad idea, he says, to mix affluence with poverty. Social housing tenants can happily live on another plot, that is to say, preferably elsewhere, and yes, development means further social segregation, and what of it, says A. In contrast, the diarist's conversation with the planners already alluded to those built projects that are no project at all, ghost projects left incomplete, secured sufficiently for other purposes: tax evasion and citizenship.

Non-humans emerge alongside these human characters. The street cats, for instance, venture back and forth across the UN buffer zone claiming no political allegiance.

Then, in conclusion, a small wonder, even hope. A moment of redemption, 'a disobedient and redemptive creature':¹⁰

'Suddenly a hedgehog . . . drama of a hedgehog.'

Here we conclude as though with a parable. A small hedgehog, lost, vulnerable, momentarily seeks shelter beneath Petrus's chair before escaping across the border into the buffer zone. Petrus, you see, stands in for those who come and go, the ex-patriot, whose liberty is one of movement. The hedgehog is a refugee from Northern Cyprus. Those gathered for yet another going away party are decided on this fact of the refugee hedgehog, they laugh together. A minor event, an encounter that expresses 'pathos without sentimentality'.¹¹

I am compelled by this sudden appearance of a small hedgehog. I have it in my head that there must be a Kafka parable that depicts a Hedgehog, perhaps a Hedgehog who sings, or else one that offers a report to an academy, or one who tells of the cares of being a family man? Minoritarian voices. I go in search of more hedgehogs, and find some other clues:

From Friedrich Schlegel: 'Ein Fragment muss gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel.' (A fragment should be like a little work of art, complete in itself and separated from the rest of the universe like a hedgehog.)¹²

Or, from Gustave Flaubert: 'The soul was entirely folded in on itself, like a hedgehog wounding itself with its own quills.'¹³

On the contrary, neither a fragment separated from a world, nor an infolded entity, but a creature in the miniature that reports of the local and global tangle of self-harming worlds.

- 1 Klaske Havik, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018. Throughout this reading the voices of the other readers at the Transversal Writing workshop will occasionally be inserted as quotes.
- 1 Catharina Gabrielson, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 3 Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000).
- 4 Kim Gurney, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 5 Marko Jobst, Transversal Writing

- workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 6 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 133.
- 7 Robin Wilson, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 8 Klaske Havik, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 9 Robin Wilson, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 10 Kim Gurney, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 11 Naomi Stead, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.
- 12 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenäums-Fragmente und andere Schriften* (Berlin: Holzinger, 2016), 53.
- 13 Gustave Flaubert, *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert: 1830-1857* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), fn 1, 22. Kim Gurney also draws attention to another hedgehog reference: Muriel Barbery, *L'Élegance du hérisson* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), published in English as *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*. Gurney describes the story briefly: 'The concierge of an apartment block who is secretly an art and culture lover and more sophisticated and knowledgeable than the wealthy inhabitants of that block. Nobody pays her much attention except for one resident who notices this fact.' Kim Gurney, Transversal Writing workshop 2, Kavala, Greece, 2018.

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Cyprus, the third-biggest island of the Mediterranean, situated in close proximity to southern Turkey and Syria, is home to a little more than 1 million inhabitants. Its geography is fragmented into the fertile Mesaoria plains of Nicosia district, the Troodos mountains in the south, the Pentadaktylos mountains in the north, and 650 kilometres of coastline. Its political history is a micro-version of the conflicted histories of the Middle East. After the end of the British rule in 1960, the young independent state was torn by conflicts; and since the Greek coup d'état in 1974, which was followed by the Turkish invasion of the northern part of the island, Cyprus is divided into a Turkish-speaking North and Greek-speaking South Side.¹ The most important consequence of what is known as the 'Cyprus dispute' however, is not only the longest UN-mandate in the world, but also the de facto expropriation of a third of the island's population in 1974, meaning 162,000 Greek Cypriots and 48,000 Turkish Cypriots.² The unresolved postcolonial conflict is a conflict about property, as about a third of the land seems to have two legal owners, one from a bygone past and one from the present.³ The conflicted imaginaries of North and South, Muslim and Christian prevail not least because the wealth of the island is grounded in the real estate sector and its mobilization as capital under the guise of 'development'. First, the development as a global tourist destination in the 1960s, then the development as a global tax paradise in the 1990s, and finally as a shopping destination for EU citizens since 2014.



Karnayio, Limassol, Foto: Kaye Geipel.

We had planned our stay in Cyprus in the spring of 2018 years in advance. Once I had finished my PhD, I would take the invitation as a guest professor from the department of architecture, while Kaye would take a three-month sabbatical from his work as an editor of the German architectural magazine *Bauwelt*. The theme we sought to investigate was the recent processes of financialised urbanism in Cyprus's coastal cities. After the banking crisis in 2013, the government of the Republic of Cyprus launched a combined sale of EU citizenship in tandem with luxury real estate to boost the economy. An investment of 2 million euros in a luxury apartment by the sea ensures a European passport along with discrete opportunities of tax evasion, the imaginary of sunshine, a sea view, and relative political stability.⁴

If an architectural design studio and the processes of financialization constituted the official framework and leitmotif of our stay, the oral histories of colleagues and friends, everyday routines and touristic visits drew a different picture. They uncovered the relations within which climate change, the commodification of the coastline, global real estate transactions and Cyprus's violent postcolonial conflict are inseparably imbricated into one another. Instead of investigating the sale of EU passports, I attempted to approach those relations between territories, environments and imaginaries through the chance collection of a diary. Following up on Guattari's ecology between processes of subjectivation, the relation to others and the environment, I left the clear-cut history of the political economy of territorial development behind and followed the detours.⁵

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Forest and Desert – Preliminary Visit, November 8th; First Class Citizens, January 13th; The Return from the Petrol Station, January 20th; Rich and Poor, February 23rd; Buffer Zone, March 3rd; Springtime, March 4th; Easter Promenade, April 6th; All Inclusive, April 7th; Bread, April 9th; Tears, April 9th; Crosses, April 24th; Sand, April 25th; The Garden, April 28th; Planning Department, May 8th; Life, May 8th; Urbanism, May 29th, Church Fiction, May 29th; The Little Hedgehog, May 30th; Real Estates, Berlin, December 20th.

Forest and Desert – Preliminary Visit. November 8th

Driving from Larnaka Airport to Nicosia takes half an hour. Thirty-seven kilometres of highway follow softly sloping hills bordering the fertile Mesoria plain.⁶ I carry a German forest in my mind and I see a desert in front of me. A desert with billboards advertising luxury real estate along the shore. I don't recognize the preciousness and coherence of the quirky few stumps, bushes and pines growing out of the yellow soil. Cypriot and colonial governments have repeatedly transformed this landscape. In the Middle Ages, the forest was cut down for ship production. At the beginning of the twentieth century, British colonizers planted acacia and eucalyptus to dry out the marshy plains. There is no desert and the vegetation is man-made.

First Class Citizens, January 13th

When we descend to the baggage claim area to await our luggage for the next months, the advertising boards for luxury real estate finally catch our eye. Women in white interiors light up and disappear on LED screens, brochures offer 'EU Citizenship by Investment', praise 'First Class Homes' or the 'ONE – Iconic Addresses'. The airport dream of a life whose only concern is better investment. Security for future generations. Estranging architecture. A passport for a 2-million-euro apartment that opens the gate to Europe. 'Se-cure-i-ty'. A word that grabs me by the throat and claims my self-responsibility.

The Return from the Petrol Station, January 20th

Dropped Kaye off at the airport in Larnaka. When paying at the gas station back in Nicosia my cards don't work. None of them. No more than five euros in my pocket to fill up the tank of the rental car. I walk back home through the night from the motorway feeder to the city centre. To the buffer zone. Four kilometres. About 40 minutes. Faster than I expected. Only my hands grow numb with cold. Until the borders of Nicosia municipality, I walk across the island urbanism of an unspecified periphery with commercial buildings, parks and hotels. Sidewalks, but no pedestrian traffic lights. Every traffic light crossing in left-hand traffic is another shot of adrenalin. Once I reach the city limits, pedestrian lights and street names appear. I get my bearings.

As I cross the Venetian fortification of the sixteenth century, I discover that the central areas of the old town are rather run down. Quite unlike the Starbucks and Yves Rochers of Ledra Street a few streets further. There are kebabs for €1.60, Indian food stores, Turkish men's hair salons, motorcycles and broken windows. I realize now why Ledra Street, 'a very famous street', as the car rental employee commented upon my address indication, is so special and unique. Something which doesn't exist anywhere like that in Cyprus. A medieval corridor street as a salesroom, reserved for the exclusive purposes of pedestrians and shoppers.

Rich and Poor, February 23rd

Real estate activity in Limassol, the biggest coastal city in the South, had increased by 27 per cent in 2017. The city attracts about half of all transactions in the high-end residential property segment⁷ in the Republic of Cyprus, its skyline will soon be marked by empty luxury towers. The commodification of the seashore as an all-inclusive product introduces the incentivized urbanism of 'infrastructure space' (a definition coined by Keller

Easterling) into the heart of the city.⁸ Our studio at Cyprus University in Nicosia proposed a programmed fissure in this type of spatial product: we asked students to project one of those luxury seafront high-rises in Limassol but to reserve 30 per cent of the gross floor area for social housing and collective facilities – the latter to be used by the luxury flat owners, social housing tenants and general public alike. In other words, we asked the students to articulate a political conflict with architectural means. Thinking about flats that will remain empty and flats that will be used; thinking about investment, marketing and maintenance strategies, and about an institution that might negotiate conflict. ‘Rich’ and ‘poor’ start to populate the studio critiques, uncomfortably and awkwardly. Terms that some shy away from like a prohibition sign.

Buffer Zone, March 3rd

No Southern Cypriot will accompany us on our week-end tours to the North. Of course, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is accessible for citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. At least on paper. But instead of a weekend trip to the seaside they would undertake a journey into their 40-year-old memories and an estranging present. Nobody volunteers for such an effort. The only ones able to switch freely between North and South are the street cats who use the specially prepared holes in the barbed wire fence of the buffer-zone. The 1.5 million cats outnumber the humans on the island.

Springtime, March 4th

The dew on the flower meadows during a morning walk in Karpaz. Cyprus’s panhandle in the northeast, a nature reserve. Titans could lift the island from here and turn it over. Yellow and red spots of wild fennel, dog daisies and poppy, the yellows and greens of endemic island plants and succulents. Behind the meadows the sea. Towards the coast, a rugged lunar landscape of sloping flat lava rocks. Small saltwater pools where algae and

jellyfish swing back and forth. The sea is rustling. The salty air settles on the skin and softens it. The ruggedness of the rocks is still reminiscent of nature's lethality; a gentle reminder of her power. So that's spring.

What is hard to express is the bewilderment over the garbage. Plastic waste. Actually, you can't really see landscape, because it is hidden beneath shredded pieces of plastic. To dive into this landscape also means to dive into the plastic waste. As manifold as the flowers. It arrives with the high tide, strands on the rocks, and is blown across some hundred metres of coastal meadows. Plastic bottles of all sizes and generations. For water, sunscreen, shampoo, shower gel, soft drinks, body lotion. Petrol cans, plastic bags, plastic sandals, toothbrushes, packaging remnants, foam pieces of car seats. 'It comes from the Turkish cruise ships,' Alihan and Maschallah explain. Every morning, the two hotel operators collect the new alluvial flotsam in the bay of their six-room hotel and store it in tons behind their house. The desire to pick up the garbage together with them; the desire to correct the image, to undo this disturbance of paradise. The disgust of touching things as if plastic molecules could penetrate my skin. They are already there of course. Why am I not afraid of the plastic bottles in my apartment. Every day two more plastic bottles of drinking water, piling up as a plastic mountain towards the end of the week. The call for an universal order who says 'no' to this. A 'no' to plastic bottles, a 'no' to ships dumping garbage into the sea, a 'yes' to plastic recycling, a 'yes' to drinking water out of a plumbing system.

Easter Promenade, April 6th

The Easter celebrations last four days. On Holy Thursday, the flower canopies above the tomb of Christ – a wooden panel and linen cloth – are set up; on Good Friday, they are sung of, carried around the neighbourhood of the church and taken apart again after the death-hour of Christ, when the icons in the church are abruptly covered with a black cloth. White

callas, soft pink roses and flesh-coloured flamingo flowers reminiscent of the beige lingerie in the shop windows of Ledra Street. By kissing icons, tomb and shroud, parishioners transmit the miracle of resurrection into their body's cells. In front of the Phaneromenis church in the city centre, soldiers with army boots and white neckties hold the tomb of Christ on wooden bars while the people dive beneath the virtual corpse-in-resurrection-process to receive the blessings for the next year to come. Impassive faces that I usually meet in Café Nero. This public space we walk across from church to church through the old town of Nicosia traverses all social strata; a space that tightly intersects the ecclesiastic, the public and private. Gradually, I understand why so many people we encounter insist and reaffirm that the power of the Church in Cyprus is greater than in Greece. 'Pastoral power is a power of care,'⁹ wrote Michel Foucault in his lectures on governance. If pastoral power supposedly precedes nineteenth-century governmentality, they coexist in Cyprus until today. It's not just a question of land ownership and political power; it's a power that keeps the pores of family structure together.

All Inclusive, April 7th

The all-inclusive trip of my parents to 'Cyprus', advertised for €169 in the German newspapers Tagesspiegel and Zeit as a gift to their readers, is organized and carried out by a travel agency of the Turkish Ministry of Tourism, which holds subsidiaries all over Europe. The journey leads into a hermetic circle of tourist infrastructures on the North side with a shopping afternoon on Ledras Street on the South side. Each day, three planes arrive at Ercan airport, each carrying 200 people who are then, for a week, fed in restaurants, put to sleep in 3- or 4-star hotels, guided around selected sites and animated to buy carpets, jewellery, leather goods and organic foods. Salad leaves shrivel under cling film in a restaurant in Karpaz that serves 600 people at a time. The industrial processing guarantees the discount. My parents talk about the difficulties of ducking out of the marketing proce-



Asterias Beach Hotel, Agia Napa.

dures. In the end, they travel home with a 1,800-euro carpet and the guilt of having resisted the 2,000-euro jewellery.

On the site of the large-scale 4-star hotel complexes Noah's Arc, Pine Bay, Grand Colosseum and Kaya Artemis, the aerial photo of Google Earth from 2003 shows nothing but coastal strip. Fields, sand and water. The real estate boom in the North began in 2004, after the referendum on reunification was rejected by the South, thus granting confidence to Turkish users of Greek Cypriot land regarding their usage rights on buildings. The boom in luxury tourism real estate began immediately, sales and developments being carried out on the quiet. 'What do you think our President and his North Cypriot counterpart discuss at their meetings.' And: 'Such incentiv-

ized spatial products are in a certain way a model for the reconstruction of the island after unification.’¹⁰ The consolidation of the status quo and the real estate gold rush go hand in hand. Threats in the South, shootings in the North. Reports of Russian mafia on the doorstep of North Cypriot activists. We assume that the manufactured products of the tourism circuits in North Cyprus originate from Turkey and suspect that they barely benefit the locals except for salaries for hotel staff and construction jobs. If 200,000 tourists travel each year to the North, 3 million travel to the South part of the island. Tourists outnumber both cats and people.

Bread, April 9th

The Cypriot Easter bread Flaouna is a yeast pastry made out of several layers of dough; outside the crust, inside a cheese-herb mixture with mint and raisins. This year there was a Flaouna crisis. A furious call from a Cypriot grandmother to her daughter: ‘You didn’t tell me yesterday that my Flaouna went wrong.’ The criterion for failure is the incorrect proportion of air bubbles inside the Flaouna dough. Too tight. The quality of a Flaouna is defined not only according to the colour and shape of its crust or its taste, but also according to the texture of the first cut. The baking of flaouna bread used to be a collective affair. Women stayed awake through the night of Holy Thursday to together watch out for the right moment when the dough reached baking stage. This moment is dictated by the fermentation of the dough and not by the baker’s time management. Women compete for the best dough.

Tears, April 9th

Maria tells us about her journey to a village in northern Greece in the 1980s where women met to cry over each family’s dead on Good Friday.¹¹ First, mothers cry over their dead children since that is the worst pain. Then the deceased spouses, then the other relatives. She has never seen such real

tears. 'It's an emotional culture that is transmitted over generations.' I think of the lonely tears of the modern movie-goers Franz Kafka or Peter Härtling's Hubert Windisch and what separates them from the ritualized collective tears of this female public. There is a dimension in Maria's contemplation on social reproduction that eludes commodification. A world in which the art of making Flaounas and performing tears gives people as much importance as the height of their income. I try to figure out the distance that separates this practice and the poetry of this practice from Maria's art work and the value that her work generates on the art market. Layered transparencies of metal mesh or paper, powerful and fragile, that cover unspeakable violence underneath. I suddenly recall those embroidery lessons my mother taught me – a class on meditative repetition, precision, and failure – that my architectural education in France taught me to despise. Disconnected and interconnected realities.

Crosses, April 24th

On April 24th 2018, Markus Söder, the Prime Minister of Bavaria – a state of the Federal Republic of Germany – adopts a paragraph to the general rules of procedure for public authorities of the Free State of Bavaria, 'to install a cross in the entrance area of each official service building . . . as an expression of the cultural character of Bavaria'. Crosses in the entrance of about 1,100 public office buildings.

Sand, April 25th

'It's not cloudy today. It's the sand in the air,' explains my colleague Chrysanthé. 'Last summer, there were days where you could just see a couple of metres ahead.' On summer nights in the seaside town of Paphos, the evening sun wraps the city into a pink cloud of sand, like a cloud installation by Olafur Eliasson. 'When I was a kid in the 1980s, this would be an event that happened once a year; now it's becoming a permanent weather condition



Arsinois Street, Nicosia

during summer.' Sahara dust, which I sweep out of the apartment the next morning after mopping the floor the previous night.

The Garden, April 28th

The city administration of Limassol has attached a caution sign at the housing estate next to Olga's house: danger of collapse. But the six-storey apartment blocks are inhabited. The grey concrete blocks were built after the 1974 Turkish Invasion by real estate developers for those refugees from the North who could afford their own flat. The concrete on the parking lot columns of the ground floor is crumbling. Opposite Olga's house towards the sea tower the cranes of the construction site of 'The One', one of Limassol's latest residential luxury high-rises, erected at 100 metres

distance from the sea. Maria explains the sign: 'The construction site of "The One" caused vibrations of the magnitude of an earthquake. When the jolting threatened to cause the collapse of this apartment block, the city's administration simply advised my mother to sleep in the other side of her house.' The problem of sea water pushing into the excavation is still unresolved. Foundations for 35 floors. Bodies and properties of retirees and ex-refugees are secondary. What matters is the profit generated by 'The One', which in this case also goes into the pocket of the president's son-in-law, one of the project's shareholders.

Olga's house prevails between the apartment blocks, the construction site a dumpster battery moved inside the plot. Like a Chinese nail house. When she moved here with her family in the mid-1960s, they lived on the outskirts of the town. Ocean waves. Summer on the beach. What prevails together with the one-storey house is the garden. A system of plant pots that Olga pushes through the garden several times a day following the angle of the sun. A mobile sun-garden made of flower pots or plastic buckets with geraniums, datura, cacti, aloe vera and endemic plants whose names I remain ignorant of. On the right is a tree nursery for the hedge that Olga intends to plant for visual and noise protection from the construction site. The only non-mobile plants are the bitter orange tree in the centre and the walnut tree on the left, which Olga grew from a walnut. The shady chill of green leaves containing the order and essence of a life.

Planning Department, May 8th

We visit the administrative officers G. and N. in a municipal planning department. A tidy office with architectural drawings on the walls and urban studies literature on the desk. G. and N. speak about pressure arising from survival issues in a country that places its priorities solely on economic and financial issues. Urban planning was evidently not at stake when it became an emergency measure to attract investors and construction

developers after the economic crisis in 2013. Today, developers have turned into a very strong lobby group, supported by architects and engineers, lawyers and sometimes financial advisers, all justifying the need – even if it is in the end only a small minority that benefits from this type of high-rise development. I mention the sale of EU citizenship and the murder in October 2017 of Daphne Caruana Galizia, who had investigated the trade of EU passports and real estate in Malta.¹² An awkward silence. Who has the money to buy 2-million-euro apartments but doesn't live in it? As the conversation ensues, G. and N. talk about control, or the lack thereof; they describe a situation where no one can control land and property prices as well as thorough maintenance regulations. What happens afterwards to these projects is entirely unclear. (Maria's words on the discrepancy between the narrowness of the streets and the dimensions of fire trucks; the discrepancy between building heights and rescue ladders.) What we are sure of by now: these projects aren't made to be inhabited.

Life, May 8th

'Life', 'survival' or 'vital' are terms that, in the everyday language of planning professionals and architects, seem to be the exclusive reserve of economic transactions.

Urbanism, May 29th

'Keller Easterling speculates in her recent publications about what would happen if these new spatial products of industrial and agricultural zones are introduced into what is commonly referred to as "city". That's exactly what happens here in Cyprus; decontextualized spatial products are inserted on top of a medieval city, with small plots and narrow streets. You want to investigate real estate? Real estate is already in the government. Political decisions are directly related to choices of the real estate sector.'¹³



Street gardens in North Nicosia

Church Fiction, May 29th

A., the well-trained CEO of Happyhouse Developers,¹⁴ is a millionaire. He advocates a universal, enlightened concept for urban development on government land since the proximity to cultural and other facilities raises property values. But placing different income groups on the same plot – a crucial part of the brief of our design studio – is another story. He politely dismisses the mix of different income groups on the same plot as whole-sale nonsense. Over a salad lunch with avocado and grenadine seeds, he explains to me the need for a governmental order for urban planning: ‘Real estate is the prime driver of the economy of this country. Cyprus has ten

billion euros of public debt; it's GDP is 16 billion; and the land of the church is worth 13 billion. The church is the biggest land owner in this country. But the church is not only corrupt. They are mad. The power gets into their heads. They are also happy to cooperate with the mafia or porn producers if that's beneficial to their real estate investment strategy. We should be governed by the European Union.' A demand for colonization by an enlightened Troika, which might increase land value through public infrastructures and, why not, also increase social inequality.

The Little Hedgehog, May 30th

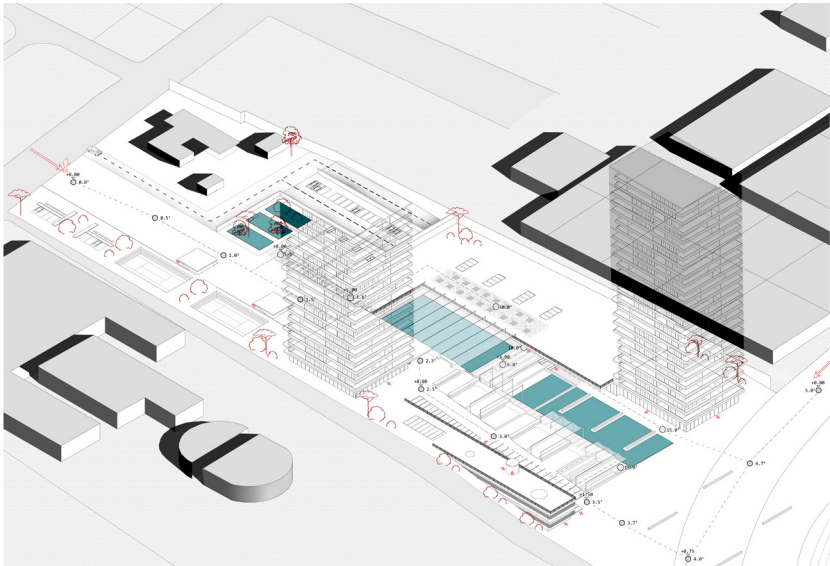
Farewell to Petros in a bar on the edge of the buffer-zone. Six people sitting on wooden chairs with wickerwork underneath a street-lamp in the leftover space of a barricaded street drinking brandy sours. Somewhere in the dark, a wall of metal barrels with barbed wire. In front of us, a street corner where a car passes at a leisurely pace about every half an hour; flashing headlights. The corrugated iron roof in the house opposite is lifted by the wind at regular intervals and crashes down on the gable. A blind cat sweeps around the chairs. Echoes. Suddenly, a hedgehog. What is he doing in this labyrinth of corridor streets? No corner for the hedgehog to hide, except a pile of cardboard boxes. Drama about the hedgehog. If the cat will find him. If he will get runover by a car. A tentative definition: 'He is North Cypriot.' Laughter. After half an hour, the hedgehog emerges from the cardboard pile, crosses the street, comes up to our group. Always running along the wall, he finds his way underneath Petros's chair and disappears into the cracks of the buffer-zone shed. 'Finally, he is back home.'

Real Estates, Berlin, December 20th

Invitation to an urban design mid-term jury. 'Berlin is totally sold out to investors,' jokes Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, guest professor at the TU Berlin, somewhat triumphantly. She asked students to trace projects and

ownership situations of current construction sites in the formerly divided city and to propose alternatives to the ongoing projects. While I looked at Cypriot luxury investments like an exotic curiosity of something that takes place elsewhere, I now get the degree of financialization of Berlin straight to my face. Townhouses, skyscrapers and other types of speculative urbanisms whose gross shapes simply delineate the silhouette of building regulations will soon occupy prime real estate locations of the city, next to rivers, parks, popular neighbourhoods or tourist hotspots. Places I have known for decades will disappear in favour of façades that I imagine now to remain dark at night. Cyprus isn't at the edge of Europe. The buffer zone's hedgehog occupies its centre.

The Urban Pool



The Urban Pool – 4th year architecture project by Marina Antoniou and Mikaella Raspa, Studio Property Plus by Anne Kockelkorn, Kaye Geipel and Chrysanthos Constantinou, Cyprus University, Spring term 2018.

On a narrow a seafront plot between a new luxury development ("Limassol Marina") and the active Limassol port, the "Urban Pool" offers an alternative to conventional luxury high-rises in Limassol. The project is run as a joint-venture between the municipality and a private developer and consists of two private residential towers (one as a luxury development, one for middle class residents) and two large public pools (one indoor, one open air). Conceived as arena for different publics, the pools counter the privatisation of the site and its urban ground floor. Their position, accesses and circulation follow the gentle slope of the site towards the sea and lead the visitors to a new seaside promenade, offering multiple viewpoints and possibilities of encounters.

- 1 The fight for independence against a century of British colonialism and its end in 1960 was superseded by the conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriots; a conflict that was spurred on by the British colonial government, who sought to exploit ethnic tension as a forceful argument to remain in power by securing control.
- 2 Ayla Gürel: 'Wohn- und Bevölkerungsfragen im geteilten Zypern', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no 12 (2009), 14-18, online: www.bpb.de/apuz/32120/eigentums-und-bevoelkerungsfragen-im-geteilten-zypern, accessed 18 July 2019.
- 3 What added up to this conflict were Turkish settlements policies which officially sought to settle Turkish citizens in North Cyprus until 1980, which was answered by circa 20,000 Turks (see *ibid.*, 17); In 2004, the rejected Annan-Plan for the unification of the island intended to grant citizenship to more than 45,000 Turkish immigrants, see Hubert Faustmann: 'Die Verhandlungen zur Wiedervereinigung Zyperns: 1974-2008', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no 12 (2009), 9-13. The result of official and unofficial settlement policies by Turkey remain a core issue of dispute between South and North Cyprus, see Socrates Stratis: 'Unseeing in the Cypriot Contested Cities', *Architectuul – the Blog, Foma 25 (Forgotten Masterpieces)*, 31 January 2019, online: <https://blog.architectuul.com/post/182444278052/foma-25-unseeing-in-the-cypriot-contested-cities>, accessed 18 July 2019.
- 4 The programme, launched in 2013, is more complex and more diversified than just the 2-million-euro formula, there is also the option of permanent residency for 300,000 euros and other offers for letter-box companies.
- 5 Félix Guattari. *The Three Ecologies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014 [1989]).
- 6 In my mental geography, the highway crosses the Mesaoria plain, which would be the direct connection between Larnaka and Nicosia; however, the motorway takes a right-angle detour following the buffer zone, the actual Mesaoria plain lies to the northeast of the Nicosia-Larnaka motorway.
- 7 'Cyprus Real Estate Market', published by PricewaterhouseCoopers Cyprus in March 2018, 27 pages, 13, 4, online: www.pwc.com.cy/en/industries/assets/real-estate-march2018.pdf, accessed 28 June 2018.

- 8 Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London/New York: Verso, 2014), 11-12: 'Far removed from familiar legislative processes, dynamic systems of space, information, and power generate de facto forms of polity faster than even quasi-official forms of governance can legislate them.'
- 9 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 [2004]), lecture five, 8 February 1978.
- 10 See the 'Laissez-Faire Private Gated City', in Socrates Stratis: 'Architecture as Urban Practice in Contested Space', in: Socrates Stratis (ed.), *Guide to Common Urban Imaginaries in Contested Spaces* (Berlin: Jovis, 2016), 13-33: 32.
- 11 Maria Loizidou figures among Cyprus's most prominent artists. For an introduction to her work, see, for instance: Maria Loizidou et al. (eds.), *Maria Loizidou: A Transfer. Kerameikos Archaeological Site and Museum, City Project 2015* (Athens: Agra Publications, 2015); Efthymia Alphas, Eftychia Zachariou-Kaila and Maria Loizidou, *The Body: Lived Experiences in Ancient Cyprus* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 2015); and Rachel Spence: 'Greece's Neon foundation', *The Financial Times*, 30 October 2015, www.ft.com/content/9d12e640-7d65-11e5-98fb-5a6d4728f74e, accessed 12 July 2019.
- 12 'Das Daphne-Projekt: Das Milliarden-Geschäft mit Pässen aus Malta', *SZ*, 18 April 2018, www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/das-daphne-projekt-das-milliarden-geschaeft-mit-paessen-aus-malta-1.3949570, accessed 28 June 2018.
- 13 See Stratis: 'Architecture as Urban Practice in Contested Spaces', op. cit. (note 11), 13-33: 32. Similar considerations were also discussed during the Workshop 'We need to talk about our coasts! The Hands-on Famagusta Project. Towards Cypriot Coastlines as Commons', organized by AA & U, Imaginary Famagusta, Laboratory of Urbanism, University of Cyprus (LUCY), 28 June – 2 July 2017.
- 14 Fictional name.